

BISMARCK'S LETTERS
: TO HIS WIFE :
1870-1871.

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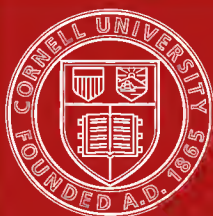
Bismarck's letters to his wife.



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BISMARCK'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE
FROM THE SEAT OF WAR,
1870—1871



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BISMARCK'S LETTERS

TO HIS WIFE FROM
THE SEAT OF
WAR

1870—1871

*Newly Translated
into English*



LONDON
JARROLD & SONS
MCMXV
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The Letters of Prince Bismarck to his Wife from the Seat of War, 1870-1871.

I.

MAINZ, *August 2nd*, 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

We arrived here to-day at seven o'clock in the morning, tired but well. I have spent four hours in bed now and would have had to go to the King at once if I had anything to put on. But as I had only a night-shirt and the travelling clothes I sent Abeken to him. Engel has been clever enough to leave all my things behind for the next train! This will come through at two, but it is highly probable that its luggage will be kept back for some days. A bed, pillows, dressing-gowns, and several other wonderful things, of which I could make no use in a railway compartment, have been carefully brought to hand for me, but no linen and no

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clothes! Carl* has taken charge of the victualling, so naturally there is twice as much as we need.

We travelled for some hours at a good rate and were stopped for some hours because the military trains blocked our way. This morning a beautiful sunrise could be seen from Bingerbrück. Every time I awoke on the first night I could not but think of the poor boys on their wooden benches—how tired they must be. So far I have no news of them here. I used the occasion of Bill's birthday yesterday to start a little intrigue to have him made an ensign. I don't know whether it succeeded. The King was surprised that he was not yet a subaltern. It was a pity that at Hamm I had nothing on the table, in which to drink his health but white wine and soda water, and no one but old Bodelschwingh with whom to clink glasses: my other neighbour was His Majesty.

I am quartered here with a rich champagne manufacturer, Kupferberg, up on the Kastrich, with a wide sunny outlook over the city, and with Rheingau, Wiesbaden-Platte, and the

* Count Bismarck-Bohlen.

Russian Chapel behind, but as far away from the King and the others as if I were at Worms: and then no shirt! The cheering of the masses of people at the railway stations was deafening: too much just now in my opinion; they should keep it until after the victory, which may God give us.

I asked you to send me the red general's uniform, not the infantry one, as for that I should need a sword and a third helmet. Otherwise I need a new white cap every two days, and the leather helmet is lighter than the iron one, which presses on my forehead. I expect the parcel will be already despatched by the time this, on these slow trains, comes to your dear hand. There is nothing new from the enemy. Nothing has happened either yesterday or to-day. I saw Cilchen* at Düsseldorf, she counts on seeing you at Nauheim. God protect you and your "Berlin boy," and the two in light blue. Tell me what you hear from them. I will let you know what happens to me.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

* Countess Schrenkenstein.

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II.

MAINZ, *Wednesday*, 3.8.'70.

I wrote to you yesterday by post: I have just heard that a messenger is leaving and send you these kindest regards at the moment of sitting down at table. Hitherto nothing has happened and I don't yet know how long His Majesty stays here. God be with you and our children.

Yours, v. B.

III.

MAINZ, *August 5th*, 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

The first battle took place yesterday near Weissenburg with victory for us by God's help. The French divisions, Douay and Ducrot, were heavily defeated! So far 800 prisoners and one gun have been brought in. With the exception of the King's Own Regiment, the French were beaten principally by the Poles (58th Regiment), the Hessians and the Bavarians, thus by those from whom they expected assistance. To-day, if it is God's will, the same will happen at



BISMARCK (FROM A CRAYON DRAWING).

Facing p. 10.

Sulz or Hagenau. We still remain here at Mainz : to-morrow or the next day we push forward when I hope to come in closer contact with the boys in blue. So far I have not been able to ascertain where the Dragoons were stationed each day. We read to-day with surprise in the French newspapers here of a " battle " which is said to have taken place near Saarbrück on the 2nd. This is the most laughable disgrace that has ever happened yet to the *gr-r-r-ande nation* ! Three companies of the 40th Regiment and one squadron of Uhlans have held Napoleon and the whole of his army engaged for eight days ! They had orders from home to fall back on our line this side of Saarbrück as soon as the enemy advanced. But they even did not do this until three French divisions, that is, about 150 companies, with artillery and cavalry attacked them : these French forces, fifty times as many in numbers, exchanged fire with our three companies. Leonidas is a ragamuffin by the side of our Fusiliers. I am still living here on the Kastrich and drive about in the evening, taking most of my meals at home with our worthy host. I excuse

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myself from His Majesty's on the ground of fatigue: it is draughty in the dining-room and so numerous are the persons of high rank that I cannot fulfil my conversational duties without fatigue.

Horses well. God grant you both are likewise. What about Nauheim?

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

Sultry, no rain here.

IV.

Telegram. MAINZ, August 5th, 1870.

COUNTESS BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN, Berlin.

Letter of 3rd received: all well. Saarbrück French invention. Weissenburg truth.

BISMARCK.

V.*

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

MAINZ, August 6th, 1870.

MY DEAREST BOY,

Hearty thanks for your letter of yesterday which I received to-day: where this will find you I do not know. We go

* This letter is from a volume entitled, "Love Letters of Prince Bismarck," published by Mr. Wm. Heinemann, London.

to-morrow morning to the frontier with the King: I wish I could meet the dear blue colour there. The beginning is, by God's grace, good, may it remain so to the end. To-day 400 French prisoners came through here from Weissenburg and 400 through Darmstadt. Near Saarbrück to-day the retiring incendiaries, who set fire to that open town like savage Indians, were attacked by Göben, and Frossard's Corps was heavily defeated, and put to flight. The same, by God's help, will befall the main army in the next few days. I have good news from your mother: send her as many letters as you both can. I hope she will go to Nauheim soon.

Kindest regards to Bill; pray God to be with me and your mother, so that we may all be united once more safe and sound, and above all that He may, in His grace, grant us victory.

Your most faithful father,

V. BISMARCK.

If either of you be wounded, telegraph to me at the King's Head-quarters as soon as possible. But not to your mother in the first place.

VI.

Telegram. MAINZ. *August 7th, 1870.*

COUNTESS BISMARCK, Berlin.

WILHELMSTRASSE 76.

A letter received from Herbert, all well.

COUNT BISMARCK.

VII.

HOMBURG, *August 8th, 1870.*

MY DEAR HEART,

We arrived here yesterday evening by rail from Mainz. Near Kaiserslautern, Eigenbrod,* who was ahead with the waggons, saw our Dragoons and threw half a sausage to them. Provisions scanty, rooms no better. I am here with Carl, 90 soldiers and many footmen in a crowded house far away from all the Counsellors. It is truly annoying that these princely spectators should occupy every room and Roon and myself forced to leave behind our working staff so that these on-looking Royal Highnesses should find room with their servants, horses, and adjutants.

* The Chancery Messenger.

I don't understand your most unchristian-like, abusive and complaining letter, without date, which I received here yesterday. I wrote to you from Mainz three times with my own hands and telegraphed twice. This is my fourth letter, and yesterday evening the third telegram was sent in answer to your letter. From London it is reported to-day that they have become disquieted in Paris. Our victory comes altogether as a surprise to them after their formidable lies and boasting. There is difficulty here in learning how the fighting is going on exactly: we have about 8,000 prisoners and some forty pieces of cannon, not counting the six mitrailleuse. Even the French themselves admit that our men fight like heroes, "un élan irresistible," and that against steep and fortified heights. I have only to reproach them for too great a scorn of death: on this account the infantry have had dreadful losses, especially among officers, and of these particularly staff officers. In the rivalry between Bavarians and Prussians or between the first, second, and third armies they go forward as if it were a race for fun. The Bavarians fight splendidly—just

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like ours. Our good friend Senfft was left, I think, on the field at Weissenburg. Roon's youngest boy has a slight wound in the leg. Otherwise the cavalry is less exposed and has not the twentieth part of the losses of the infantry, which must abandon to a certain extent such a Berserker onslaught on the enemy, for such good blood as our soldiers' is rare in the world. There is nothing here but sky and Saxons, who are angry that they have not yet come at the enemy.

I embrace you and Marie,

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

VIII.

ST. JOHANN, *Aug. 9th*, 1870.

Saarbrück is still standing after all: it lies opposite me on the far side of the river, and behind it the mountains from which, seven days ago, the French descended and shot at Prussians who were not there and so won a victory without an enemy, and over which they were driven back again three days ago. I am staying at Herr Haldy's. Everything is elegant and snug, but far from the King, who is staying over in Saarbrück. I shall dine with

him at six, am quite tired after travelling from Homburg here, and have ten despatches in cipher before me which I cannot read as there is no key here.

I cannot yet get any information about the boys but that they are stationed in the neighbourhood of Saargemünd. God protect them and you and the one with you.

Yours, v. B.

IX.

Only two lines of kindest regards through the messenger on leaving for St. Avold. Yours, v. B.

COUNTESS BISMARCK.

ST. AVOLD. 11 *Evening*.

I wrote the above this morning and put it in my pocket, so could not find it when the messenger left. When changing I found it, and now add to it that we are quite well. I am just going to lie down in M. and Mde. Laity's bed, who left their house early this morning, running away from us without any reason.

Yours most faithfully,
v. B.

X.

HERNY, *August 14th*, 1870.

MY DARLING,

Some hours eastward of Metz, in the direction of Falkenberg, you may perhaps find on the map the village where we are to-day, but not the number of flies which force me to write with a shaking head. I am at a farmhouse forsaken by its tenants: their neighbour, however, has stayed and regaled me yesterday with a fowl which had made my acquaintance two hours before appearing on the table. My good teeth were unable to make any impression on its corpse. Then I learned that a civet of a tame rabbit is a meal for hungry folk, even though its ingredients, several hours before, amused one with its lively capers. Again, like a healthy person, I eat fried and raw bacon with so much garlic that my breath certainly seems to me to smell like a saltpetre cellar. All this agrees with me very well, and I should be quite satisfied if I could only hear a word from Bill and Herbert. The Dragoons are still about six to eight miles away from us:

to-day they were the other side of the Moselle, having passed between Metz and Nancy. God preserve the dear boys from sickness and wounds. The danger of the latter in the cavalry is much less. The poor infantry lose terribly because no troops ever fought like them before. At Wörth eight thousand men were lost, not counting three thousand missing and scattered! The greater number of these, however, will be found again, as the French in their flight will have taken very few prisoners. Thousands of the French, weaponless and in a confused medley of foot and horsemen, fled. Our fifth division lost quite one hundred officers, of whom nineteen were killed outright. I have just seen a battalion of the 12th Regiment (5 Divisions) which has now but three officers, a sergeant acting as adjutant. A non-commissioned officer said to me, "If we had held the French position, the devil himself could not have taken it; I wonder indeed that we took it ourselves!" It is a shame to lose so many of these heroes, but the moral impression on the French soldiers is so overpowering that it may spare us much bloodshed in the future. We cannot

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get them to fight again, and have been looking for them in vain these three days. Steinmetz, through his obstinacy, makes himself so disagreeable as to be dangerous: there is almost a question of his dismissal, but the King opposes it: all the generals desire it. The Crown Prince leaves us without any reports. The Bavarian reports are printed in Munich, whence the Berlin papers get them; and in spite of the slowness of the post we thus hear in the first place what happens to the Third Army before the actual reports reach the King. All promotions and distinctions are delayed by this, and the French versions always come out a fortnight before ours. Our people behave very well in their quarters.

You will have received my watch: it suddenly stopped in the night, perhaps I broke it when winding it. Please get another key for it with a bar or leaf, which one can take hold of with the fingers when winding and grasp without difficulty. I bought myself a thick silver one for ten francs. I also send you 23 frederic d'ors, as they pass here only for Napoleons. Cigars received, but I should

still like some good small ones for myself. No iron crosses distributed yet—probably not ready. Perhaps this is a good thing, for when some are seen about with them the others will not be able to hold themselves back and will be thrusting their heads in the mouths of the Frenchmen's cannon : they are already like Berserkers. The French think that our men are so accustomed to manœuvre shooting that they quite forget that real bullets are used here ! A fine eulogy of our gallantry.

Now farewell, my heart ; embrace our daughter for me and pray with me for our sons. Yours,

v. B.

XI.

Telegram.

HERNY, *August 15th, 1870.*

Yesterday a very bloody battle before Metz. Our military authorities have the impression that the end of the French resistance has begun and expect to be before Paris shortly.

BISMARCK.

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XII.

Telegram. Despatched from FRANKFORT-ON-MAINE, *August 16th*, 1870.

7.3 P.M.

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK,

Herbert and Bill have been seen this morning, very well.

VON BISMARCK.

XIII.

PONT-À-MOUSSON, *August 16th*.

MY DARLING,

Although I sent you a telegram in which to inform you that Carl saw a dragoon to-day who had left Herbert and Bill to-day four miles from here in good health (he saw them both), yet, as it is very doubtful whether telegrams can leave here at all, for they cut our wires daily, I am writing to you again. The third and tenth corps are fighting about eight miles from here in a northerly direction against the French, who are falling back from Metz. The latter, four divisions strong, have so far been driven towards Thionville. If this comes off, the

French army will be so scattered that they will not be able to be collected again, and the campaign will be as good as over, unless God visibly intervenes on behalf of the French, which, I am confident, will not happen. The people here must take me for a bloodhound; the old women, when they hear my name, fall on their knees and beg me to spare their lives. Attila was a lamb beside me.

Farewell, my heart, the letter must go.

Yours most faithfully, v. B.

XIV.

Telegram. Sent from PONT-À-MOUSSON,
17th August, 1870.
8 P.M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK,

I have spoken to Herbert and Bill: Bill's horse was shot, but he is quite safe. Herbert harmlessly shot through the thigh, bone uninjured. He will be brought to me this evening, then I will send him to Nauheim, so that you will go there at last! Phipp* well.

BISMARCK.

* Eldest son of the Brother and Lieutenant of Reserve of the First Dragoon Guards Regiment, d. 1894.

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XV.

PONT-A-MOUSSON, *August 17th.*

MY DARLING,

I telegraphed the principal news to you. We were called up at three o'clock this morning, drove and rode four miles: then I heard by chance that the First Dragoon Guards had many losses, rode two miles across country, making many enquiries but incurring little danger; found Herbert with two hundred and fifty wounded in a farm, Bill visiting him under pretence of requisitioning a horse: he really found a lean hack. Herbert lay beside Szerdahely (Second Dragoon Guards) and one whose name has escaped my memory. He looked just as ever, only two holes in his left thigh, a shot having passed in and out of it: wounds well bound. I sent for my carriage, spent four hours waiting for it, and then found that a sitting position hurt him and that the heat was too much. I left the Chancery messenger Krüger with him, requisitioned a waggon in which he could lie down, and in this he will be brought here in the cool of the evening. Two shots also

passed through his clothes, one of which glanced off my black wooden watch and smashed it. I took it away with me and gave him instead the watch I bought at St. Avold for ten francs. I shall bring the black one to you and buy myself a new one. Bill's horse was shot in the attack, so that he was thrown on his head and was first thought to be dead. But he is stout and lusty; he looks very dirty. The campaign is now over for Herbert, and he, if God sends him no other misfortune, is preserved from any further mishap, for his wounds will take some weeks to heal. I will send him straight by train to Germany. How would it be if you nursed him at Nauheim? If he does not get the Cross, I will never wear orders again. Wesdehlen, Westarp, Reuss, and Kleist were left on the field, Auerswald shot through the abdomen, seriously: he also lies there. The three squadrons which attacked lost twelve officers; men not counted yet. Everyone a hero! The Third Hussars, Thirteenth and Fifteenth Uhlans, and my poor yellow Cuirassiers have lost—in the absurd and impossible cavalry attacks which Voigts-Rheetz ordered—

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one-third of their men and quite more than half of their officers. I will not be bitter after God's gracious preservation of our two boys, but the leadership of the First and Second Army is clumsy in its misuse of the death-scorning bravery of our men ; fists alone without the head, yet still we conquer. But we have lost so many, especially officers, that we will not have enough left if we wish to get to Paris. It is wasting the best soldiers in Europe. Moltke is good, but Steinmetz is no general. We fought yesterday against more than double our number, against a better position, better weapons, and brave foes, and yet we conquered. Farewell, my dear heart, embrace Marie and fear nothing.

Yours, v. B.

Revolver good, horses well, but tired, dead tired : on horseback from three to eight in the evening.

XVI.

REZONVILLE, *August 19th.* Morning.

I slept well in camp. The Dragoon Guards did not go out yesterday, so that nothing has changed. Herbert, I hope, arrived



COUNT VON MOLTKE.

Facing p. 26.

at Pont-à-Mousson yesterday evening. I saw him at noon at Mariaville: he has no fever; festering is setting in. On horseback yesterday from three in the morning till nine at night. French totally defeated; we can now examine them closer. Yours,

v. B.

To COUNTESS BISMARCK-SCHÖNH., Berlin.

XVII.

PONT-À-MOUSSON, *August 19th*, 1870.

I have come back to Head-quarters at Pont-à-Mousson after two days' absence, very tired but quite well. I am not writing myself but dictate this as I am eating mutton and potatoes. Herbert is lying in my room above; is better, and the best proof of his well-being is his vigorous smoking, for which, when I saw him yesterday at Mariaville, he had no inclination. I came back this moment after we moved out at three o'clock yesterday morning: my letter of yesterday, written from Rezonville, you will receive at the same time as this one. Herbert's departure for

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Germany does not depend upon his condition—as far as that is concerned, he could leave to-day—but upon the completion of a short piece of railway which had been cut off. You may therefore go as soon as you can to Nauheim, where, by the way, telegraphic and railway communication is as good as in Berlin.

Now* I have finished eating. I was very hungry, for I ate nothing hot for two days, and have had only a few hours' sleep during the last three days. I feel splendid, ride five or six miles on Uncle Tom, who is the most uncomfortable of all horses; drink coffee and smoke six cigars a day. God preserve you and put an end to your headache by turning it into cheerful good health. I have read two of your letters, those of the 17th and 16th; the others I shall read immediately. Yesterday many Guards were left on the field, heroic men far too brave to live. This grieves far more than victory rejoices me.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

* Henceforward written in his own hand.

XVIII.

P(ONT)-À-MOUSSON, *August 20th.*

Herbert is lying beside me, has just slept soundly for four hours, is better and will be able to go away in a few days. Go now to Nauheim and find rooms. Hearty congratulations to the dear child for to-morrow.

v. B.

XIX.

COMMERCEY, *August 23rd.*

I have taken leave of Herbert at Pont-à-M. this morning. Kryn, who attends to his wounds, goes with him to-morrow morning by train *via* Nancy and Mannheim to Nauheim, where he hopes to find you. He will be travelling for two days and so will arrive at Nauheim Station on Thursday or Friday. He was very well and in good spirits; I had to buy him trousers to-day as he had none at all. Everything is well with me, always about and in good health. Kindest regards to Marie.

Yours,

v. B.

XX.

BAR-LE-DUC, *August 24th.*

MY DEAR HEART,

We are advancing speedily. To-day at noon I left pleasant quarters at Commercy with worthy old ladies, tearful wives and mothers of generals who all want peace. There is no enemy before us: we have occupied Chalons and even further. We shall fight either before Paris or not at all. Napoleon is said to have been at Rheims yesterday. I do not think it impossible that he has it now in his mind that he will have to use his army against the Parisians rather than against us, making peace with us, and, with the support of his army, tyrannizing over the rest of France. This would suit me well enough, but one cannot judge yet whether it be true. The French main army is locked up in Metz by Prince Fr. Carl with 200,000 men: it can no longer be 100,000 strong. Moreover there are 20,000 wounded in Metz with typhus and gangrene: what provisions they have and how long they will last, the future alone will show: when

BISMARCK'S LETTERS, 1870-1871 31

they kill the horses they will begin to think of surrendering.

I left Herbert well yesterday; Fritz,* who came across me at Commercy, saw him at five o'clock this morning, when he was waiting to be taken away by train at seven. The Red Cross were ready for their duties. When you receive this letter, you will, I hope, have him with you, for I heard that you would travel yesterday. By God's help I am better than could be expected. I eat, drink, and sleep like a healthy man. God grant you and Marie the same and a good cure at Nauheim. We stay here until to-morrow morning at least.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

XXI.

Telegram. MAINZ. *August 25th, 1870.*

3.5 P.M.

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK,

BAD NAUHEIM.

The Count, your son, will arrive there between 7 and 8 in the morning; expects ambulance and attendants.

DR. FREY.†

* General Count Bismarck-Bohlen.

† Swiss Voluntary Army Surgeon.

XXII.

BAR-LE-DUC, *August, 25th.*

DEAREST HEART,

We march from here this morning to St. Ménéhould in the direction of Rheims. There we shall be without telegraphs or railroads and so news will be longer in coming. I am writing again from here where I could willingly stay longer, for there are good beds, wine, and attendance. I have no news to tell you but that I am quite well and that, as a result of the victory at Metz, we advance six miles almost every day without seeing anything of the enemy. Their main army is still at Metz, locked up by Prince Fr. Carl, and we only want to see if there is anything which has been set up on its legs meanwhile at Rheims. Napoleon is said to be there.

Herbert will have left Pont-à-Mousson yesterday morning: he will complete the journey in two to four days according to his condition. Perhaps he is now with you when this letter reaches you. Bill is now with the Dragoons of the Life Guards, some miles to the left of us. You may,

under God's help, have no fear on his behalf: a regiment that has been so cut up as the Dragoons will not be brought into the firing line again without pressing need. I have made repeated enquiries about Bülow* and have not yet been able to find out anything, so doubtless he is well and with his regiment. Itzenplitz† is said, alas! to have been left on the field: but do not say anything about it, for it is very difficult to get the truth; it may be a mistake. It grieves me beyond measure for the old man, if it be true: Lehn-dorff told it to me to-day. The regimental reports reach home sooner than here. But whoever is not reported dead, is, as a rule, unwounded and alive. A most hearty farewell, drink and bathe in peace, trust in God, Who has guarded our children from the jaws of death; kindest regards to my dearest Marie.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

Birthday of the Bavarian King, and I have no decorations!

* Lieutenant in the Second Dragoon Guards, second son of the later Secretary of State.

† In the Zietenhuazaren, only son of the Minister of State.

XXIII.

CLERMONT EN ARGONNE, *August 27th.*

MY DEAR HEART,

We thought we should find MacMahon first at Chalons, he retreated from us to Rheims; we were going to look for him there but heard just in time that he was trying to get to Metz *via* Verdun to help to release the besieged French main army under Bazaine. He cut a hook, as they say in hunting, and we, in pursuit, tried to cut him off to make him stand at last and fight. MacM.'s troops are of less value than Bazaine's. He has many *gardes mobiles*, nine hundred of whom we took prisoners yesterday with a squadron of Uhlans. This you may communicate to whom you like—even to the newspapers. We are staying here in a small hole west of Verdun. I am with the school-master, bed on the floor, a rush-bottomed chair, a little pine-wood table on which I have to wash, write, and eat. Provisions difficult to get. The people here have nothing left. I have now come to regard the floor, bacon and ammunition bread as remedies

whose efficacy I had not known before : and thereby I find myself in good condition. Herbert will now be with you : I received information yesterday that he had passed through Nancy in the train in company with Colonel Canitz.* The time taken for the journey depended upon how his wounds could stand it. I spotted Bill yesterday at St. Ménéhould quite well. Did I tell you that every dragoon of the Third Squadron laughs at once when he is cross-examined by me about Bill ? His merriment is contagious. May God give it to you and Marie too, and a good water cure. Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

Field Post much worse than '66 !

XXIV.

CLERMONT, *August 28th.*

Still lying on the floor at the school-master's, otherwise well. Bill was seen by an officer yesterday quite well : he had marched through here an hour before we entered. I was informed at length yesterday

* Wounded Commander of the Second Guards Regiment.

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about young Bülow* that he is unwounded and well. I telegraphed to Thiele† yesterday. I have not yet had a letter from you at Nauheim; the last one was brought yesterday by a messenger, dated Tuesday, from Berlin. I hope you are nursing your old son there by now. Hans Arnim‡ well: saw the youngest red Boitze§ yesterday, who saw him.

I have been writing since seven this morning: it is now three: I must go out before I dine with His Majesty at four.

Kindest regards to both children.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

Bavarians marching through for four hours, blow false.

XXV.

CLERMONT, *August 28th*, 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

I sent you to-day a hurried pencil note by the messenger, now in the evening I have time and my thoughts turn to you.

* See previous note p. 33.

† Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

‡ Son of the Sister of the Federal Chancellor.

§ Count Arnim.

I am writing in advance as I do not know whether I will have time in the next few days. I hope that we shall leave in the morning; it is only a question of waiting for reports upon which our direction depends. It is not particularly pleasant here with only one rush-bottomed chair, general staff with night service below and bureaus with the same above me, 20 people who live in this small noisy house, 5 screaming children beside me and not even a . . . : one has to get used to go about it shamelessly in public as best one can and to induce the guards at least not to stand by with presented arms. Excuse these details, but this is the most uncomfortable part of the campaign hardships. Since the 19th I have not seen any warlike operations in my neighbourhood, a good deal of political work, some Saxon cavalry affrays, marches, and counter marches by which we are trying hard to bring the French to stand—that is at least MacMahon: the main army under Bazaine is locked up in Metz and we have to prevent MacMahon's force from relieving it. That is why we have marched here from

XXVI.

VENDRESSE, *August 31st, 1870.*

MY DEAR HEART,

Yesterday we reached them at last, a little south of Sedan, which you will find on the Meuse on any map. They thought either that we were not so near or that they were stronger; in short, we joined with them south of Beaumont. Justav* with the Fourth Corps and our brave 26th and 66th ran straight over two French Divisions one after the other. Besides them the 86th (Holstein) and the 31st, the Nordhauser Chasseurs, on the left wing the Saxons, then the Bavarians and Würtemburgers. The most difficult work was done by Justav with the good Schönhauzers. The chase extended over two miles : now and then they would make a stand and roar with their mitrailleuses like an engine letting off steam. So far, eleven of these not very effective instruments of death are reported to be taken and some twenty guns, about 7,000 prisoners, of whom new companies are continually being brought in by

* General von Alvensleben.

the hundreds. I saw over 1,000 of them in one spot near Beaumont, cornered in a quarry, among them a priest who is said to have shot our wounded: I had him immediately unfrocked; at any rate, if he is convicted, he will join the order of Cordeliers, but with the rope round his neck. Our good cousin of Briest, the captain of the 26th, is said to have been left on the field—he is said to be seriously wounded: this too has happened to the stout colonel who commanded the 26th for so long, and two years ago was at the family party. A son of the road surveyor at Fischbeck greeted me: he had a slight wound in his arm, and I left what money I had on me with him. Of the end of the pursuit, on the other side of the Meuse and below Sedan, we have no news as yet. But the French have certainly lost 15,000 men, the armies of MacM. and Failly are completely scattered. Napoleon, father and son, were with the troops; we saw their suite in the distance through our field glasses. The Dragoons did not fight. I am as well in body as I have been for a long time: as far as business is concerned, still confused.

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Gorschakow is less encouraging than his Emperor.

Kindest regards to the children. Yours,
v. B.

XXVII.*

VENDRESSE, *Sept. 3rd*, 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

The day before yesterday at dawn I left my quarters in this place and returned to-day: in the meanwhile I witnessed the great battle of Sedan on the 1st: in this 30,000 prisoners were taken and the rest of the French Army, which we had chased from Bar-le-Duc, were driven into the fortress where they were forced, with the Emperor, to surrender as prisoners of war. Yesterday at five o'clock in the morning, after I had been discussing the terms of surrender with Moltke and the French Generals until one in the morning, General Reille, with whom I am acquainted, woke me to tell me that Napoleon wanted to speak with me. I rode, unwashed and without having breakfasted, towards

* This letter is from a volume entitled "Love Letters of Prince Bismarck," published by Mr. Wm. Heinemann, London.

Sedan, and found the Emperor in an open carriage with three adjutants and three horsemen at the side, waiting on the main road to Sedan. I dismounted, greeted him as civilly as if we were at the Tuileries and asked his commands. He wished to see the King: I told him the truth was that His Majesty had his quarters three miles away at the place from which I am now writing. On his enquiring whither he should go I offered him, being unacquainted with the surrounding country, my quarters at Donchery, a little place on the Meuse near by Sedan. He accepted my offer and rode, escorted by his six Frenchmen, myself and Carl, who had followed me up in the meanwhile, in the lonely morning towards our side of the country. When near the place he regretted his acceptance on account of the possible crowd of people, and asked me whether he might put up at a lonely workman's cottage on the road. I made Carl examine it, and he reported it to be poor and dirty. "*N'importe,*" said N. I climbed with him up a crazy flight of stairs, and in a room ten foot square, with a pine table and two rush-

bottom chairs we sat for an hour, the others being downstairs. A powerful contrast with our last meeting of '67 at the Tuileries ! Our conversation was meagre as I did not wish to discuss things which must have a painful effect on this man, cast down as he was by God's almighty hand. I made Carl send for officers from the town and bade Moltke to come too. One of these officers we then sent on a reconnoitring expedition and discovered at Fresnois, at a distance of half a mile from us, a little castle with a park. Thither I accompanied the Emperor with a surrounding escort of the Body Guards Regiment, and there we concluded with French Commander-in-Chief Wimpfen the terms of surrender, by virtue of which some forty to sixty thousand Frenchmen—I don't yet know exactly how many—with all they had, became our prisoners of war. Thus yesterday and the day before cost France one hundred thousand men and an Emperor. The latter left this morning with all his following, horses and carriages, for Wilhelms-höhe near Kassel.

It is an historical event, a victory for

which we must thank the Lord our God in all humility, and one which ends the war, even though we must still prosecute it against a France without an Emperor.

I must close. I saw with heartfelt joy in your and Marie's letters of Herbert's arrival among you. I spoke to Bill yesterday, as I already telegraphed, and embraced him before His Majesty, bending down from my horse while he stood at attention in the ranks. He is very well and cheerful. I saw Hans and Fritz Carl, both Bülow's boys, with the Second Guard Dragoons, well and brisk. Farewell, my heart; kindest regards to my children.

Yours, v. B.

XXVIII.

VENDRESSE, *Sept. 3rd.*

MY HEART,

As another messenger is leaving to-day I am writing you by the same two more words in which you may learn that we are leaving here in the morning for Vouziers in the direction of Rheims. The Army of MacMahon which we attacked near Beaumont-Mouzon (Justav) consisted then of

120,000 men. Of it nothing is left. About 30,000 may have been wounded and killed in action, some were scattered into Belgium and there disarmed, and the rest are made prisoners. At the same time, the enemy at Metz on the 31st and 1st made two attempts in the east and north to break through our lines but were defeated by the 1st and 9th Corps and driven back into Metz. There must be held up in that place from sixty to eighty thousand French soldiers—all that remains of the main army with which the war was begun. We hope that they, too, will surrender soon. Then the lies of the Paris newspapers about everlasting victories will be at an end. I mounted my horse yesterday morning at six and did not dismount until midnight, having ridden ten to eleven miles, was twice drenched and dried again, and have eaten nothing warm for the last three days. When, on the aforesaid midnight, I chanced upon a dish of stewed meat, I ate it like a wolf and then slept quite fast for six hours. Then I felt like a fish in the water, and what is more wonderful still, so does Röschen, who had no food or water

for eighteen hours, and who did those eleven miles under me on a bad road and in darkness and rain : she took her food at once with a good appetite. Joseph,* I am sorry to say, has a sort of dysentery, and I fear he must stay behind somewhere. In the meantime I have a Hussar orderly to take his place. Nap. sleeps to-night at Neufchateau in Belgium. Good-night. Kindest regards.

Yours,
v. B.

XXIX.

Telegram. Sent PONT-À-MOUSSONS 5.9.1870.
11.20. A.M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK, Nauheim.

I saw Bill on the 2nd in camp at Sedan, well and cheerful.

BISMARCK.

XXX.

RHEIMS, *Sept. 5th.*

Just as I dismount here I learn that a messenger is ready to start, and in haste I inform you that all is well with me

* Footman.

and everyone. I wrote to you from Donchery that I saw Bill on Friday in camp, quite well. We shall stay here at Rheims probably for some days. Kindest regards.

Yours,

v. B.

XXXI.

RHEIMS, *Sept. 6th.*

Only a word, my heart, that I am quite well. While the weapons are at rest for a few days, the paper affairs rise over my head so that I have not a moment to spare. I had a most gratifying conversation with the Crown Prince at Donchery. In Paris, a Republic or at least a provisional government by Republicans. All the same to me.*

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

* We still shall get there.



BISMARCK IN 1883.

Facing p. 48.

XXXII.*

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

RHEIMS, *Sept. 7th*, 1870.

MY DEAREST BOY,

The King told me to-day at dinner that you were appointed an officer and Bill an ensign. Of those appointed one is ahead of you, I think Behr is his name, then you, then Dohna and a number of others. I am pleased that you have received it on the field and after so brilliant an action of the regiment as that of the 16th. God grant you many years in which to think of it with thanks for His grace which protected both of you in that field of blood. The other ministers here have not been so fortunate with their sons. You know about Itzenplitz—Roon's good long shell—was shot through the abdomen while with his battery on the 1st; a bullet wound, died on the 3rd in the evening. My poor old Roon is quite ill with grief and is in bed; he told me that Leonhardt has lost a son too. Few families among us will be without mourning. There is a

* From Vol. VI. of the "Bismarck Annual," p. 233.

Republic in Paris, whether it will last and how it will develop we must wait and see. My desire is that we let the people stew in their own sauce and that we make ourselves at home in the conquered departments until we can go forward. If we do this too soon we shall prevent them from quarrelling among themselves. Internal peace cannot last long with this socialistic crowd at the head of affairs. Above all I wish that our reserves would come up. The regiments have not yet received any reserves to take the place of their losses at Wörth, and yet everything is ready at home. There is a great deal of red tape and unnecessary writing in these matters. Bazaine is making many sorties from Metz. Another to-day: we are still waiting to-day for news from there as the wire has been cut again at Clermont. But yet it must certainly surrender soon, just like Sedan. On the 1st and 3rd we took something like 90,000 prisoners, 60 generals, and some 6,000 officers or men of official rank. Strassburg was willing to surrender at once if free withdrawal were permitted, but we don't wish to let escape the sixteen to eighteen

thousand men who are there. God preserve you, my old boy, and give you soon the use of your limb again. Kindest regards.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

XXXIII.

RHEIMS,

Saturday, the 10th *September*, 1870.

*The messenger will have to leave while I am in conference, which I cannot interrupt, with General v. Boyer and President Delbrück. I can therefore only answer just now the letter I received to-day by messenger, with the assurance that I am quite well and cheerful and that all is going in the best possible way. I have just returned with the King from a visit to the French camp at Chalons, much talked of lately, where the magnificently furnished apartments of the Emperor and Empress were destroyed by the populace. I must draw your attention to a report of me of my

* Dictated.

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meeting with the Emperor on Sept. 2nd, which appears in the *Staats-Anzeiger*.

With* thanks to Abeken who wrote so far, and kindest regards. Yours,

v. B.

XXXIV.

RHEIMS, *Sept. 12th*, 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

Two months ago to-day I left Varzin for Berlin: what a piece of history has happened in the meanwhile and what has become of the question of the Spanish Succession about which we with Bucher had to cipher and decipher so much! It occurred to me just as I was writing the date. Your last letter of the fifth, received yesterday, lies before me. Blixen-Finecke is my guest here from Copenhagen and Sweden, married some time ago to the Rumpenheimer Princess, who sent you guava-rum, apples, and other things in Frankfort. Be friendly to the Rabenaus, they are good people and political friends. Present my compliments to Emmi Below when you see her: there was no letter from Eisendecker enclosed in yours. I have

* Henceforward in his own hand.

answered the one from Westphalia, sorry about the damage done by the rain. I am sorely afflicted about Schreckenstein, but do not tell him that, only speak of my sympathy and admiration for his great-heartedness. Beps* is getting on well, I hear, the gallant blade : he is said to be in the way to complete recovery. Herbert's wound must surely be mitrailleuse, otherwise the bullets would not have stuck so deep in him and the horse, and would heal easier. The mitrailleuse bullets all seem to have a poisonous admixture which blackens and irritates the wound at first. I do not know how Bill is to-day, but he has not been in battle since Sedan. We have stayed here eight days to give the whole army time to carry out its great wheeling movement from Sedan to Paris. About the day after to-morrow we are going forward. I still think we shall have no more fighting either near or in Paris. During the rest from actual fighting, the diplomatic correspondence has increased and multiplied, the dammed up stream of ink has poured itself over me,

* Lieutenant-Colonel von Puttkamer, Second Life Guards Regiment.

of you all ; it's the business that is rising over my head—not doves, but crows, of peace are beginning to attack me, and the administration of the occupied territory increases the stream of ink that flows towards me. Yet I found enough time yesterday, when I heard that the Cavalry Guards were in the neighbourhood, to ride across country and look for our young sprig of an ensign, and to find him at last at Montgé, 2 miles north-west of here. I brought him cigars and cognac, found him well, strong and brown, quite slender but not thin. Philip is here to-day, he has the Cross, and I declined His Majesty's invitation to dine with my nephew. Bill's adventure of the 16th is not exactly as I told you before. His horse was not shot under him but stumbled fifty paces from the enemy's square over a horse that had been shot in front of it. Getting up again, Bill, on foot, led his horse away by the bridle, under God's protection, in a shower of bullets, having first placed in the saddle a wounded dragoon who was lying near by. He, on foot, and his comrade in the saddle, were not hit by any of the bullets sent after them,

but the horse received so many that it fell down dead after Bill had led it with his rescued comrade out of the zone of fire. He behaved himself courageously and with thought for his comrades. I thank God that He let me experience this joy over both boys and has yet preserved them for us. His grace will surely remain with them and us in the future. Kiss and give my kindest regards to the Lieutenant and his sister for me.

Yours most faithfully, v. B.

XXXVI.

FERRIÈRES, *Sept. 21st.*

MY DARLING,

I am sitting here under the portrait of old Rothschild and his wife; am well, so is Bill, but I can only write in flying haste. Negotiations of all lands hold me by the coat tails like Jews hold a dealer in the market place, and the messenger must leave this minute. We are hungry, as His Majesty has forbidden requisitions for Head-quarters, and there is nothing to buy. Kindest regards. Yours,

v. B.

XXXVII.*

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

FERRIÈRES, *Sept. 23rd*, 1870.

Eight years ago to-day, I believe, I became Minister.

MY DEAREST BOY,

I received two letters from your mother of the 15th and 16th, from which I learn with sorrow that your wounds are not doing well. You have had a bad year with bodily ailments, but yet I praise God's mercy thankfully that He enabled you, as it is, to outlive your regiment's charge of the 16th of August, for it has not been left to many to tell that they were there. Your leg will not remain stiff, with God's help, but its movements will be rather rusty for some time longer, the surgeons say. The tearing of the muscles is so great that the renewal of the sinews and their practice in movement will take a long time. Roon's wound is a lighter one, but in spite of this, if God wills, we shall

* Published in Vol. VI., "Bismarck Annual."

yet have many a ride together through the Forest of Varzin. There is no more riding here, the Crown Prince would let you know. He was with me when I received the letter, and I read to him your mother's complaints. What is left here to do, if there is anything but to starve them, will be attended to by the infantry and artillery.

That I visited Bill in Quarters at Meaux and found him well, you will already have heard. I received the letters for him and attended to them: also received one from Malle. I quite understand the annoyance about Wilhelms Höhe: kitchen, stables, and liveries were sent from Berlin against the King's wishes: and thereupon Napoleon at once dismissed and sold his own in order to save. Napoleon, well-treated, will be more useful to us, however, and that is all that concerns me. Vengeance is God's. The French must remain without knowledge as to whether they will get him back: that will increase their discord. The night before yesterday they began to kill each other in the street with cannons. It is not our business to unite them against us. Tell Mama that

I am quite at one with her about the advance of money to the Mesendorfer Mayor, and beg her not to remind him of the loan.

I have already been negotiating three times for hours at a time with the Frenchmen (Favre accompanied very humbly by Ring and Hall), but they still get such a severe attack of the gripes about Alsace that we have to break off. They think that they can get together five thousand millions of francs and seem to be ready to give it if we would leave them Strassburg: but I told them that we would talk about the money later, after we had settled and secured the German frontier; for as soon as they were strong enough they would attack us again, I said. But they denied this with most emphatic protestations of peaceful intentions. All this has happened before. But what has not yet happened is the speedy and complete recovery which I wish you and for which I pray God, my heart's own boy; with a thousand regards for Mama and Marie.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

XXXVIII.

FERRIÈRES, *Sept. 27th.*

MY DEAR HEART,

Herbert's pencilled letter gave me great satisfaction, and I thank the old boy most heartily, and to this is added the Swiss Doctor's letter, which rings so cheerfully but which shows me for the first time how anxious it has been for you during the last fortnight. You must have undergone real anguish, remembering Bonn, my darling, and have most bravely kept back the news from me. But anxiety has come upon me every night, though I controlled my nerves quite satisfactorily ; I could scarcely have done this if I had received serious news. I feel nervous now it is all over, as you always do, but I will not embitter thereby our joyful gratitude to God. Malle has telegraphed in distress about Hans, and I sent out Leberström* at once to find out where he is and whether he is well. But he cannot be back before the morning. He must first go five miles from here to find out where the

* Mounted policeman.

regiment is. I will then have news of Bill as well, of whom I had good news yesterday. He has taken back his horse from me after I had nursed it better. Kindest regards to his brother and sister. Yours,

v. B.

XXXIX.

FERRIÈRES, *Oct. 1st, 1870.*

MY DEAR HEART,

Two months I have now been on this campaign and I have spent nearly a fortnight in old Rothschild's green damask: this last part of the adventure is beginning to pall: my existence is too monotonous—a great deal of writing on German, Prussian, and French affairs, great heat during the day but cooler at night. Inconveniently my spare time is as a rule during the heat of the day when for exercise I more often sit than walk. Early rising is not easy for me, and so my day is too short. Yesterday we celebrated Her M(ajesty)'s birthday with congratulations at half-past nine in the morning, then a decked out dinner with all the Princes and decorations; this is an exertion for me as I have to

talk discreetly and politely to the gentlemen. Three days ago I shot some pheasants, but without satisfaction, for the gun was too small and had a short butt, and only nine cartridges were to be found: shot also too small. Otherwise they (that is the birds) are in great number here. In a few days we shall remove to Versailles. Yesterday some Frenchmen sallied out of Paris, attacked the 6th Corps, lost 600 prisoners and then asked for an armistice in which to bury their dead: two hours were allowed to them. Those in Metz will make a sally one of these days as they are building bridges over the Moselle. We have plenty of time and are looking for winter quarters, when I shall find time to visit you. Good news from Bill yesterday. These good young fellows should both have the Cross, but so should every dragoon who was present on the sixteenth of August. Now that Phipp* has it—he deserved it as well as anyone and got it by the officer's recommendation—there is small chance for our poor boys—for then the name would be too frequent in the lists. Apart from that, Phipp

* See note p. 23.

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is already set down to my account as my son by people who congratulate me without knowing any better, and I myself have one which I naturally have not earned but which I cannot give back to the King. The stout Colonel, if he is still alive, and the Briest Captain probably have it too. I would give mine to one of the boys if I dared.

Kindest regards,

Yours,

v. B.

XL.

VERSAILLES, *Oct. 8th*, 1870.

MY DARLING,

If I am not now the busy correspondent of the first weeks do not be angry with me on that account. The business waves of ink have overtaken me on my journey, and so overwhelm me, that I hate the well from which they flow and have little time to spare from which to let you have what is yours by right. I received to-day your letter of the 2nd and see therein with sorrow what anguish you have had about Herbert. After these sorrows we will not

embitter our gratitude to God for His gracious protection by complaints about matters of small importance. It is a great matter to have two sons safe with their four limbs whole from that Dragoon battle. When I think of Bonn and Mars la Tour, I can allow, hoping, of course, to see them both safe after the war, no other feeling to arise in me but deep gratitude to God. For the matter of that I have seen too many thousands of corpses and cripples and admired too much heroic spirit that dropped into death and oblivion in unknown modesty. The dragoons who rode with our boys deserved the Cross every one of them, and all of us here at Head-quarters walk about with them without shame or sorrow. In the Cavalry Guard the Crosses were distributed, not according to service but according to regiments. For example, there are four Crosses for the 1st Dragoon Guards and the same for the Body Guard, who would certainly have fought as bravely as the Dragoons if they had been given the opportunity, but they were only under fire at Sedan and had two wounded. They now decorate, with their four Crosses,

these two and two other brave men. It is no concern of the King—he acts according to the suggestions of the Revision (Goltz), and the Dragoons had no one to make suggestions for them as their staff officers and captains were killed. As for me, I cannot ask for anything for my sons, but without any doubt they have deserved it. Enough of this however. You will have received my telegram of the 3rd about Bill being well. He took me by surprise in bed on the 2nd, with Blumenthal's* uniform and some stranger's trousers: on this hung Carl's Landwehr cartouche. Then he put on my general's helmet, incorrect only on the top, and I took him in this fashion with me to church, where he reported himself to His Majesty who said nothing about this accoutrement. At dinner we drank Sec, bought from Rothschild's cellar, until your son had a red saddle on his nose. Then he rode with Philip, by way of Lagny and Claye, back to his quarters, three miles distant, but not without having taken my gold from my waistcoat pocket, two pairs of gloves, and

* Lieutenant 1st Dragoon Guards Regiment.

taking care to get some cognac and cigars. Gerhard* sent from Rheims, and Dachröden, with Jagow, who reported Bill's safe return, dined with us. Lehdorff is still lame from a fall in Clermont five weeks ago, but in good spirits despite his sufferings: he goes about with the aid of a stick. The weather has changed to rain to-day, but it is warmer on that account, as it used to be during those sunny weeks from five in the evening till eight in the morning. I fled from the drudgery to-day and, in the calm still autumn air, galloped for an hour on Röschen through long straight Louis XIV. avenues of the park, among murmuring leaves and clipped hedges, by calm, shallow ponds and marble gods, and heard nothing human save the rattle of Joseph's sabre behind me. I was overcome at last with home-sickness brought about by the falling leaves and the loneliness among strangers, together with childhood memories of shorn hedges that are no more. This pleasure I shall take daily after this in the lonely King's garden, whether rain or sunshine, to escape from the negotiating

* Von Thadden.

diplomatists. The letters, alas, I cannot avoid; they are often more troublesome from Berlin than from abroad, elections for the Landtag, difficulties with the Pope, German administration and personal quarrels in Alsace-Lorraine or Rheims where, at present, the Grand Duke von Schwerin is Governor and Gerhard with him. Russia is behaving very amiably; England, except for the trade in arms, not so bad; Beust is as uncertain as ever, and our American friends, now that France has become a Republic, no longer know with which side of their faces to smile more benevolently. They love us just as much as ever, but a Republic! they can no longer hate the French. Yesterday, the Badenese, who were marching here from Strassburg, cut to pieces some thousand franc-tireurs near Raon l'Etape on the Meurthe, and Bazaine moved out with all his force in a northerly direction from Metz, but he was driven in again after losing five to six thousand men. We lost eight hundred men in the action: our men are now posted behind entrenchments both there and here, and the French must come at them across

the open ground and thus lose more men. All the ladies here—where I saw the first woman again for two months—are in black, whether from national or family mourning. There are more here than with us at any rate who need to wear mourning. I enjoyed Herbert's pencilled note very much and thank him heartily for it, though it grieves me still that his poor leg cannot yet carry him. Kindest regards to him and to my dear Marie. Convey my sympathy to Schreck and my best wishes, and kiss Cilchen heartily for me.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

XLI.

VERSAILLES, *Oct. 20th*, 1870.

21st.

I have lost a day which I have not yet found again.

MY DEAREST HEART,

I have a most guilty conscience about my irregularity in writing: you must set down some of the letters of August, when the business had not yet taken hold of me, to the account of this letterless time. Every

day I am some hours short and from to-morrow it will be worse, as the ministers of the South German States arrive to sit in council over the new 1000th year Empire. I put it off every day until the evening and am so tired when it comes that I think there will be time after I have slept: then in the morning there is a pile of telegrams again. To-day at noon I was going to begin again when an alarm was sounded, sortie from Mount Valérien, four hours on horseback, heard many reports of guns and saw many bombs explode within good range: back hungry, and then I had so much on the table to read, write, and discuss by mouth that it is nearly twelve o'clock and I am making sheep's eyes at my bed. I telegraphed to you by instalments that everything is in order and so until to-morrow.

The 22nd. I slept well but not enough. Your letter of the 18th arrived yesterday. You are so active that I feel ashamed, but yours is the only handwriting I am glad to see when it comes, and of course that of the children. Thank Herbert for his letter.

Thus far I got this morning and now it is

midnight again. Delbrück, Beningsen, King, papers, telegrams and despatches to read and write, and these military folk make my business dreadfully difficult! They snatch it for themselves, spoil it, and the responsibility is left to me.

23rd. I cut off what I wrote in my midnight anger, for the post sometimes falls into the hands of the enemy and then my complaints would become open accusations. To-day, Sunday morning, I shall not return to the theme.

It is raining autumn-wise, not very cold but bad enough for camping. Has Bill underclothing and the like? Give Herbert the money he needs for any outfit and a good horse. But possibly he could buy better here, at any rate it is sometimes worth while. About Bill's requirements in the matter of outfit I have heard nothing yet; he has one horse, he is supplied with one and gets everything else from Berlin on the strap. Ask him when you write to him whether he can let you have the account—people must have urgent need of ready money just now—tailors, etc. We shall probably stay some

time here before Paris. I don't know whether the Generals of the Staff had other intentions before or what, but the battery of siege guns has not yet arrived and we shall not fire a shot at the defences before November. On the other hand I am expecting this morning many ministers from Bavaria, Würtemberg, Baden, Hessen, and Saxony, and Frenchmen of all parties. When the time will be found to see them as well as the nuisances that are here already is a matter most difficult to see. I beg Herbert to be cautious with his riding and not to feel well too soon; his wound was too serious for that. His regiment is still at Villette, near Mitry, taking exercise and riding remounts in the rainy weather. At present there is nothing to do but occasional patrols. Kindest regards to him and Marie. I dare not keep the messenger any longer. Farewell. God take care of you all.

Yours, v. B.

XLII.

Telegram. VERSAILLES, Oct. 22nd, 1870.
COUNTESS BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN, Berlin.

Both letters of 18th received, all well,
much work.

BISMARCK.

XLIII.

Telegram. Sent VERSAILLES the 27th October,
1870. 3.30 P.M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK.

Metz surrendered to-day. 150,000 prisoners, among them 4,000 officers and 20,000 wounded. Everything well here.

BISMARCK.

XLIV.

VERSAILLES, 28-29th October.

MY DARLING,

It is quite past twelve and I have only just finished conversations which were begun early this morning and were both useful and futile. I sent you a telegram about Metz yesterday, but as I shall not get up to-morrow before the messenger leaves I must vent to-day my indignation about the reports that have reached your ears and have even been published in some of the newspapers, that it was I who stopped the action of our guns against Paris and am thus responsible for the protraction of the war. Weeks ago I used to hope every morning to be awakened by their roar; over two

hundred are set now, but they do not fire and they will not be directed against Paris but against certain forts. There hangs over this whole affair an intrigue contrived by women, archbishops and professors, high influence is known to be working in order that the flattery from abroad and the incense of idle talk will not be jeopardised. Everyone complains of some hindrance of an unknown nature; one says that the artillery transport is being held back on the road so that it cannot come up, another complains of the lack of earlier preparations, a third says that the ammunition is not enough, a fourth that the armament is not ready, and a fifth says that everything is ready but that there are no orders to fire. Meanwhile the men freeze and fall ill, the war is dragging on, the neutrals waste time discussing it with us while the time passes and France is arming herself with hundreds of thousands of guns from England and America. All this I set forth daily, and then people get it into their heads that I am responsible for the war dragging on—which will cause the death of many an honest soldier—and all this so that

certain people may be praised for saving "civilisation." Please contradict it to everyone, and give my kindest regards to my children. Herbert should not be in a hurry. It is one thing to take exercise daily by riding for a couple of hours but quite another to stick to the regulation harness for ten hours on a stretch. Then again there is no occasion for cavalry, the regiment is still at Villette aux Aulnes, and will stay there until peace is declared or until spring. I am quite well. Many ministers. We are probably going to convene the Reichstag here at the end of November (20th) with the Federal Council and Congress of Princes.

Yours,

v. B.

XLV.

VERSAILLES, *Nov. 3rd.*

MY LOVE,

For three days now I have had a *tête-à-tête* with Thiers daily and no armistice is yet the outcome of it. They want to have everything and to grant nothing. The German ministers take up my evenings, that is, when I am not attending to the King, and

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papers and telegrams, but I am quite well notwithstanding. Kindest regards.

Yours,
v. B.

XLVI.

Telegram. VERSAILLES, *November 8th*, 1870.

10.14 A.M.

Bill and Philip are here on three days' leave.
All well.

BISMARCK.

XLVII.*

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

VERSAILLES, *November 12th*, 1870.

MY DEAREST BOY,

I thank you for your letter and understand and sympathise with your annoyance at your removal to the Depot Squadron. I should have been delighted if you had come, but I am too superstitious a father to do anything about it but let things go as God ordains. As far as the service is concerned

* Published in Vol. VI. of the "Bismarck Annual," p. 286.

you will be more useful there than here. The regiment is still at Tremblay or thereabouts, takes exercise and rides remounts, and seldom has the agreeable change of a transport of prisoners. Bill and Phipp were here three days ago—seven miles of bad roads there and back, both stout and bored—they looked over the castle and gardens and dodged about between the street and breakfast. You don't miss much here: the French now rarely shoot their 93 thaler shots into the sky, and our men are still without ammunition. What influences are those which still delay its arrival! I have my thoughts about them but will not write them here. But my scribblers manœuvre day and night and intrigue in the old Frankfort style. If a German storm does not come between them, nothing will come to a head with these diplomatists and Bureaucrats of the old school, at least not this year. But by waiting we lose nothing. I received to-day, at the same time as yours, two dear letters from your mother, and thank her heartily for the psalms and love. I send her enclosed a few leaves from a bouquet which a subaltern of the 47th kindly brought me

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from the outposts, with the information that his Silesians gathered them for me under the French fire. To-day I was awakened at ten with a serenade by the 82nd—rather early, but very pleasant. The soldiers have much in their hearts for me, the Princes no roses without thorns but, alas, plenty of time which costs me mine. Greet Mama and Marie heartily.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

The conversation with Thiers was quite interesting: he is certainly the most charming Gaul I have yet met, but from the first word I did not count for a moment on an armistice. He seems to have done so, but his wishes delude him about his compatriots in Paris, who would have all but stoned him. We have time until they have eaten their dogs and those beautiful long-haired cats; perhaps we need not shoot at all seeing that so far we have not done so.

Enclosed as a wrapper of the bouquet leaves:

PROGRAMME.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Parma March | von Budik |
| Fest Ouverture | Hamburger |
| Studentenlust-Walse | Strauss |
| Frühlingserwachen Lied ohne Worte | Bach |
| The Pauline, Polka Concertante | Sachse |

XLVIII.

VERSAILLES, *Nov. 16th*, 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

Delbrück leaves this morning and I would gladly accompany him so that I might derive from my attendance at the Reichstag at least the pleasure of seeing you again, but I dare not venture from here. The atmosphere around here is so thick with attempts at mediation and quarrels among neutral Powers which may work over in our direction, and so many princely imaginations about Germany haunt Head-quarters that I cannot leave His Majesty, however difficult it is to deny myself a change from this treadmill work. I don't often go out of my workroom, hardly ever into the garden, for there is not time and weather for riding

every day. I see scarcely anyone but our councillors and chancery officials, and the King when reporting to him and conferring with ministers. I do not remember a time so barren of incident as this, varied only by visits from high personages whose political fancies I combat. But I will put up with it all if God will but give it a satisfactory end both this and the other side of the Rhine. German affairs give me most work. Delbrück takes upon himself the greater part of the latter but he cannot take the Princes nor the Europeans. Then again the Reichstag will take it ill that I do not grant them the honour of appearing among them. I cannot make public the reasons why it is necessary for me to remain here, but help Delbrück to spread about the idea that the journey would upset me too much, that I was not ill but not strong enough to stand the journey both ways and the Reichstag as well and then be able to transact business. That I would not return exactly refreshed to this house of labour after three nights' travelling in the train, eight days at the Reichstag and six hours' journey back, is no lie either: but you

need have no fear that I am not well—that is bodily at any rate. There is much annoyance, as there will always be wherever there are Princes without any work to do, but I am becoming inured to it anyway.

Delbrück leaves this afternoon: tell him (what is the truth) how thankful I am and how I admire his sustained and successful power of work: you know that my ability to acknowledge anything is not great, but that this so impresses me that I must even speak of it in my letters to you, which, as a rule, are filled with thoughts of anything but business.

Our cannons are still silent, although they have three times as many guns as they can make use of at once. At home, that is two months ago, I was by no means in favour of the besieging of Paris but of other methods of war; but the main army has been nailed fast here for two months, and, while our enthusiasm is waning, the French are arming, so that the siege must now go through to the end. It seems now as if the four hundred heavy growlers and their thousands of tons of projectiles must stay here until

after peace is made and then go back again to Berlin. Moreover it is not a question of bombarding the town but only detached forts. This is perhaps not known to those who are supposed to have caused this delay by their influence. God knows what is best to do.

Hearty greetings to the children and Oberchen,* whose faithfulness you praise. Is it snowing there? Here we have alternating mild sunshine and rain. Your most faithful (in spite of Oberchen), v. B.

XLIX.

VERSAILLES, 12.11.'70.

I only write now, my heart, to tell you that I have good news from Bill. Carl Dönhof saw him riding the day before yesterday on his black hunter, in good spirits. I am over my head in work, but am getting near the end with Bavaria and Würtemberg, which pleases me, and makes me forget the Anglo-Russian annoyance. Your journey to Reinfeld makes me somewhat uneasy about your poor father; is he still well? Write

* Privy Councillor von Obernitz.

me at once about it. I am all right, but busy day and night. Roon is sick with vexation about the intrigues against the bombardment of the Paris forts. If it ever becomes known why our good soldiers must sleep under shell fire and yet not attack, there will be bad feeling; and it will be known, for too many people believe it. Whether the King knows and tolerates it, or is deceived about it, is a matter of opinion. I willingly believe the latter. The plot, if it exists, has ramifications in the general staff, whom I don't like on the whole, with the exception of good old sensible Moltke. They are mad with imperialism; the success has affected them in their heads, and I am often afraid that this presumptuous self-conceit will be visited upon us. Some of them conceal themselves behind Moltke's name, for he is old and lets things pass. The regiments it was who pulled us through—not the generals. Good night, my heart. Kindest regards to our dear father and the children.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

L.*

TO COUNT H. BISMARCK.

VERSAILLES, *December 1st, 1870.*

MY DEAREST HERBERT,

I don't know whether your mother is back yet from Reinfeld, but I scarcely think so, as the parting will be sore on account of your grandfather's weakness. If she stays long enough in R. for it to reach her, let her know at once that I wrote. My last letter was addressed to Reinfeld, but as I was informed from there that Mama would have left before it arrived, I held it up in Berlin by telegraph, where it still is. There was much in it about the cautious handling of which I was not sure after the ladies' departure. So far I have always been afraid of missing them if I wrote to R., as the answer was often delayed, though perhaps that is natural enough. Two or three Reinfeld smoked goose breasts would be quite welcome here, and then a ham if an opportunity for quick and safe delivery presented itself. If our ladies are in Berlin, give them my

* Published in Vol. VI, of the "Bismarck Annual," p. 237.

kindest regards. I am quite well: I eat and drink what I like, the weather is mild, but since yesterday clear and cold. I rode to Marly and climbed some 100 steps up the waterwork's tower, from which one can see Babel quite distinctly from the Pantheon on the right to the Arc de Triomphe on the left, which is cut on the right by the sloping profile of Mount Valerien. They defended themselves quite bravely yesterday; the Würtembergers lost 40 officers and 700 men yesterday; they fought very well. It is three months to-day since Sedan, and in three months our artillery has not been able to fire a shot at the fortress, which is not very strong in itself, contains over 60,000 field troops, and holds in play 300,000 of ours

Your faithful father,

v. B.

LI.

VERSAILLES, *Dec. 7th*, 1870.

MY DEAREST HEART,

At last I will be sure to send you at least a few lines, although the unfortunate 3 o'clock post is again breathlessly pressing,

and Weimar's Lord awaits me. The other day Herbert wrote, philosophically, a very sensible thing about Bill. "It is a pity that Bill writes so little, but it can't be helped, anyway." If anything had happened to him, I should have known it long ago through military reports, and you may therefore be sure that, with God's help, he is well and wallowing in oysters between Rouen and Havre. I don't know exactly where he is, but no doubt the postal connections are not completed in the whole district which the Northern Army now occupies, and as soon as it is connected up, the dammed-up stream of Bill's ink will find its way to you. Your enquiry from Reinfeld whether to send a smoked goose breast was surprising to me, as I counted on the whole goose. Up to this I have been eating some daily in the shape of gifts, but it is not always the same thing as the Reinfeld ideal. A *Weiss sauer* would be very acceptable after ham. After the brilliant victories on the Loire and in the North, our main army sits before Paris inactive still, whether fast "within prison walls" or "encircled round the knees with

a female garment," like Thor, and thus prevented from going forward, the Lord only knows, but it is saddening, and costs us more men than any attack. Our good Pomeranian 9th and 49th Regiments won the victory of the 2nd with the loss of much blood, and so did the brave Würtembergers. But Moltke, as well as the rest, and with, of course, a deciding voice, is against the assault, and in favour of all armistices. The assault, he says, would cost us 1,000 men, which I don't believe, myself. This defensive waiting for hostile sorties, the daily small losses and sickness have cost us in the last two months about 10,000 men. I refrain, of course, from setting my civilian opinion against such authorities: but good old Roon is quite ill with vexation at our passive attitude and his waning attempts to bring us to attack: resignation has now made him better, but still no one can speak of the matter for he then becomes ill with bitterness. He stays here only to please me, for otherwise I should be quite a political and social outcast. I don't mean that I have to encounter the opposition of the whole political sphere—

quite the contrary—but I have not here a human soul with whom to talk about the future and past. When one has been a minister too long, and that, by God's sanction, with some success, one feels distinctly how the cold swamp of jealousy and hatred gradually rises higher and higher to his heart: one makes no new friends, the old ones die, or fall back in ill-humoured modesty, and the coldness from above grows more and more—which is common to the natural history of Princes—even the best. All affection needs some response if it is meant to last. In short, I am chilled in spirit, and long to be with you—with you alone, in the country. No healthy heart can tolerate this court-life for any length of time. But I am well physically, better than I have been for years and days, and send you and the children my hearty love though with a little home-sickness.

Yours,

v. B.



PRINCESS BISMARCK.

Facing p. 88.

LII.

VERSAILLES, 12th Dec., 1870.

MY DEAREST HEART,

I write before the post leaves, to tell you at least that I have had good news of Bill, and that from your friend Edwin, in a letter dated the day before yesterday, from Rouen. He has been ordered for the Staff Guard of the 1st Army, that is, the personal escort of the Commander-in-Chief—a position relatively less exposed as the Commander must not expose himself. Bill was the first Prussian to enter Rouen, whose inhabitants are said to be less inimical than most of the French. We have here a clear frost, 5°: since last night the rain and snow are beginning to pass away. The Princes bother me with their officiousness, as, also, does my most gracious one with all the little difficulties connected with the simple imperial question, through princely prejudices and trivialities. Next week Christmas, and what shall I send you, poor girl, and our daughter? Myself, for choice, but there is no chance of that!

At last Roon is encharged with the transport of ammunition, and in eight days he hopes to have as much as is required. I wish this had happened two months ago. There is much about this that I would tell, but preferably by word of mouth. I should like to send Herbert a fine sabre blade for Christmas, and one to Bill as well, but it must take the usual permissible form. When I say blade, I mean sabre and scabbard, but the value must lie in the blade. God protect you.

v. B.

LIII.

VERS., 14th Dec., 1870.

MY DEAR HEART,

You have so spoiled me with letters that when Engel comes in every morning I look at his hands to see whether there are any letters in them. For five days now they have been empty, and that disturbs me somewhat, perhaps only because you were so industrious before. I turn over all sorts of reasons in my mind, whether Christmas business or (which God forbid) ill news or nursing prevents you.

I am tolerably well, in spite of storm and rain, exhausted with annoyance at the well-known themes, plagued with work beyond measure through the fault of other people, and not real necessity—otherwise I should not complain. By this time you must have my good news about Bill in my last letter, that he is quite well at Rouen. Kindest regards; in post haste.

Yours,

v. B.

LIV.

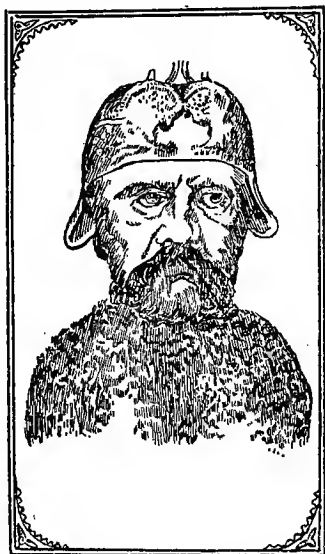
VERS., 19.12.

MY DEAREST HEART,

Many thanks for your letter which I . . . so far was I when interrupted by business, and now the post-bag is closing. I saw a messenger from Rouen, who spoke to Bill the day before yesterday; he laughed (as they all do) at the question. Smoked goose breast sent on. I look like the enclosed.

Yours,

v. B.



LV.

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, the 24th December, 1870.

2.40 P.M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK.

Bill wrote to me the day before yesterday from Amiens. There and here all well. God's blessing for the holiday.

VON BISMARCK.

LVI.

VERSAILLES, 24.12.'70.

MY DEAREST HEART,

It is hard indeed to be separated to-day, but when I think of a year back at Bonn, we have good reason to thank God that we are only separated to-day in the hope of a speedy meeting. The enclosure will comfort you about Bill for the present at any rate. Send him smoked goose breast, and then he writes. I am sending him another to-day by the same messenger. At last there is a prospect of the bombardment of Paris, we hope before New Year. What Roon and myself with months of work could not achieve, the noise of the Berlin newspapers, and the echo of it which the Reichstag brought here has succeeded in bringing about. Even Moltke is said to be converted since he received newspaper poems which point out that his system of action—as if the matter did not concern him—found no mercy in the public opinion. The prestige of the leadership reposes on the admirable heroism of the troops! Only a little less of it and none

of the leaders could stand up before the criticism. Owing to the scattering of our army from Tours to Lille, the overhasty wastage of troops, and the sleepy conduct of war before Paris, there is not one department in France in which we are complete masters, so that we could exact an indemnity. May God better it, His arm is not flesh. In Him I trust, when I look at these dissolute people. We, too, are sinners, but not yet so Babylonish, nor so opposed to God. Give my regards to and kiss the children. Give Marie, from me, whatever she wants : something gold, as a souvenir of the time. Herbert shall have a double-barrelled gun, if not to-day, then for his birthday.

Yours most faithfully,
v. B.

Did you receive my telegram of to-day ?

LVII.*

VERSAILLES, *December 26th, '70.*

MY DEAR HERBERT,

I can only set down on paper hearty good wishes for your birthday, and thank

* Published in Vol. VI. of the "Bismarck Annual," p. 238.

God in the distance that He has graciously guarded you this year in all dangers and preserved you for us. It would have been a bitter day of mourning for us all in place of your birthday if some things had happened otherwise by a hair's breadth, in Bonn, on the battle-field, and in Nauheim. Thank God then, with me, for His grace, and for the joy with which I think of you. I have written to Mama that I wanted to send you a gun; choose it yourself with the year 1870 on the plate. We are going to celebrate your birthday here, I hope, with the first artillery performance. It was not God's will that mine should be done. God bless you.

Your faithful father,

v. B.

LVIII.

2nd Holiday.

MY DARLING,

Just a greeting, and thanks for the charming cups. The little tree was lit up for coffee, and I wrote by its flickering light to Munich. Then Kendell called us from the drawing-room into the dining-room again. I had a fine big tree, and something for everyone under it. I don't mind if the gun

for Herbert costs even 100 thalers or more; it is a souvenir of an earnest time. His letter was just closed, and I must send this one separately. Kindest regards to Marie, Oberchen, and all.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

Received letter of the 23rd. Be patient and good, my heart; we are all wanting in grace, and must submit to the will of God, Who is good to us beyond our deserts.

LIX.

VERSAILLES, *1st January*, 1871.

MY DEAREST HEART,

The first time I write in the New Year shall be to you, and that should bring us luck. The beginning is good, letters from you and Herbert; at Varzin, too, everything is pretty well, and here a striking proof is provided that our artillery excels the French. Mont Avron was smashed in one day and occupied without loss. Those hitherto opposed to the bombardment are converted and look somewhat sour on account



BISMARCK IN 1885.

Facing p. 96.



of the rapid success of the artillery, for everyone says to himself in private that we could have done this two months ago if a dozen people of influence had not prevented it for several reasons. But more of this by word of mouth, for I hope to see you this year, of which fifteen hours have already passed! Herbert's joy delights me: be good to Einsiedel: I saw him being brought in on a stretcher, wrapped in his cloak, when I was going into the house to see Herbert: he has an honest face. I was at once afraid that his poor long leg would be long in healing. All this annoyance has attacked me in my left leg, the old venal plexus over the ankle. I have kept myself quiet, and dieted myself for three days: yesterday, I took a glass of weak punch, and now it is on the move again. I still use it as a pretext not to make any New Year visits, as it still hurts me to stand for any length of time, and this is unavoidable at Court. Grand Duchess Helen sent me an excellent caviare and six bashliks: she is still as gracious and amiable as ever. I thank God for Marie's good courage, and that there is still one of

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us who see anything but blackness ahead. Would that her George-thaler which hangs on my watch-chain could infect me with her innocent, pleasanter outlook. It is too sad when old people are so fretful. God improve us. Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

LX.

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, the 1st *January*, 1871.

7 P.M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK.

Received felicitations by telegram from Bill. Yours also.

v. BISMARCK.

LXI.

VERSAILLES, 4.1.'71.

MY HEART,

I just received your letter of New Year's Day, and pray God, with you, He will bring us together soon. If you were here I should soon accommodate myself to these winter quarters, and wait for future events with resignation. But that would not do; wives and daughters are forbidden in Headquarters, or there would be too many of them, for even the most incorrigible casino-fly gets

a feeling of longing for that family life he despised at all other times. It might have been far otherwise if we had begun the storming sooner. After the brilliant success of the first attempt with the siege guns, nobody opposes it any more, and you will scarcely find a single person who admits he was ever opposed to the assault, and yet only three weeks ago of all those who were called into the War Council only Roon's opinion was correct, and "General Adjutant" Boyen sought to convince the members of the Reichstag that Roon, through lack of sense, and myself, through jealousy of the General Staff, were the only ones in favour of attack, and that because neither of us knew anything about it. You know Boyen's further connection here. He is, so to speak, "Ambassador" to this Court-Camp. To-day we were to have begun in earnest, but God did not wish it, and sent a thick fog so that one cannot see a hundred paces ahead. We hope now for the morrow; the lost three months can never be made up again.

The 5th. At last they have begun to shoot—since eight o'clock. I counted 15

to 20 shots per minute. The French did not answer, and now, at two, our guns are silent too. Perhaps sufficient effect has been made already. I am quite interested to know.

What does the good Suabian really mean? I don't understand his letter. Answer him kindly.

Bill was seen yesterday by a messenger, who arrived here to-day, and was well. Enclosed is the rarity of his handwriting. Thank Herbert for his letter, and kiss good Marie from me for the same reason.

Yours most faithfully, v. B.

To-day, post haste.

Enclosed the following slip in the handwriting of Count Lehndorff.

VERSAILLES, *Jan. 5th*, 1871.

At 8.15 the first shot was fired from the battery, since then more. Perhaps you have known this for some time, but I did not wish to miss an opportunity of sending to you at your bedside, as soon as you awake, the news of this fulfilment at last of your wish.

9.30.

LEHNDORFF.

LXII.

VERSAILLES, 9.1.'71.

MY DEAR HEART,

In the flying haste of business I am giving the courier two lines before three o'clock, to reassure you about my health. For three days I have taken walks, and for even longer have driven out. Lauer thinks it is the first sign of gout, and thus a draft for twenty-five years at least, even if only in an occasional touch in the big toe. I have sent Bill cigars often so that he might make friends. To-day it is Roon's fiftieth anniversary: unfortunately he lies in bed. I am going to him now, and hope to be one of the few whom he will see. He is ill by the fault of other people: we have both paid for the carrying through of the siege operations with our health. Kraft Hohenlohe, zealous and expert, throws the bombs 10,000 paces. Thick snow. Kindest regards to the children.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

I enjoy your letter every morning. I read yesterday, in bed, Psalm xxvii., and fell

asleep comforted after v. 14. Do the same and with thanks in spite of all.

Enclosed the following telegram :—

Count Bismarck-Schönhausen. VERSAILLES.

My cordial felicitations for the Cross. First class! I regret your indisposition. I hope that the bombardment will soon restore you. You will shortly receive a bonbonnière with chocolates from me.

Marie Princess Carl of Prussia.

LXIII.

Telegram.

Sent VERSAILLES, *January the 10th, 1871.*

3.50 P.M.

COUNTESS BISMARCK,

Bill is here with Baron von Man-
teuffel. I am quite well again.

VON BISMARCK.

LXIV.

VERSAILLES, 11.1.'71.

MY DARLING,

Our stout boy taking leave of me this morning, woke me rather earlier than I am wont to get up. He has just gone with

Manteuffel to the Army formed at Besoul, the command of which his present chief is taking over, as Zastrow is not well. He is quite well and strong, and Manteuffel is satisfied with him ; he is " practical." M. told him he would take care of him out of gratefulness to you and your " tea at Frankfort." I am pleased that he still remains with the Commander of the Army ; he sees and learns more than with the regiment, and while in truth he is in God's hands, yet as regards human intervention he is less exposed to the Franc-tireur murderers. I mention this for your comfort as I fear you will worry and fret yourself ill, which will happen anyway when the strain is over. I now go out for long walks, and drive about daily when it is too slippery and cold to ride. Bill came here yesterday morning just as 150 Bandsmen (4th Corps) of this Division gave me the enclosed serenade, after which I treated them all with mulled wine. Everything here is white with snow ; fairly cold and clear weather, which is made use of by our artillery to continue the bombardment. I count on an average 20 to 25 shots per

minute, and with some of them the windows and ground tremble even at this distance. I think that the negotiations must soon begin. Kindest regards to the children; guard against sorrow by prayer.

Yours most faithfully,

v. B.

CHORUS OF BANDS OF THE 9TH
DIVISION.

NO.

1. Hoch Deutschland, herrliche Siegesbraut, Sieges Fest March by Franz Abt.
2. Overture from the opera, "Don Juan" by W. A. Mozart.
3. The Hohenfriedberg March, by Frederick the Great.
4. Am Meer Lied, by Franz Schubert.
5. Jubel Fest March, Deutschers Kriegs and Sieges March by George Goldschmidt.

LXV.

VERSAILLES, 21.1.'71.

MY DARLING,

I have not written to you for a fearfully long time: forgive me, but this Emperor parturition was a difficult one, and

Kings have their peculiar fancies just like women before they give up to the world what indeed they cannot keep back from it. As the midwife I had often a violent desire to turn into a bomb and explode, so that the whole building might be blown to pieces. Necessary business grieves me but little, it is the unnecessary that annoys me.

Löper* will have written to you, I hope; he promised me to. Shuck came to me to-day, no doubt you sent him to reconnoitre, he spoke words which I had written to you. He was satisfied after he had practised his hocus-pocus feeling, squeezing, and listening. Riding and lemon juice he prescribed, and Vichy. All that is being done, but the roads are so muddy with rain that one can only ride on macadamised roads. Poor old Roon is still very weak. Schlemitz is trying to burden me with the unpleasantness about the "Imperial and Royal Highness" question, but it rests entirely with the King and the Minister of the Royal Household; it must be settled with time: so far the sisterly opposition is very strong. The Grand

* Reporting Councillor to the Home Office.

Duke of Baden is very reasonable and accommodating, but he is the only one who helps me now and then in business. Carl has been unwell for some time—stomach; Hatzfeld the same—cold. Abeken has some sort of writer's cramp. Bucher is like a fish in water. I have read Scherr, he is indeed a lying driveller. Carl just reports that since nine o'clock sixty of our guns have bombarded St. Renis. Yesterday evening suddenly His Majesty and the Crown Prince came into my room when we were just getting up from table. Trochu wants an armistice; that won't do. Hearty greetings to the children. Ober—and Unternitze.*

Yours,

v. B.

LXVI.

26.1.

MY HEART,

I have been negotiating for three days with Favre day and night, and if too many difficulties are not set in the way by our side, an armistice of three weeks will begin the day after to-morrow, which no doubt

* See note p. 82.

will lead to peace, at all events the surrender of the Paris forts. God grant it His blessing. Favre is here. Farewell; kindest regards.

Yours,

v. B.

LXVII.

VERSAILLES, 27.1.'71.

MY DEAR HEART,

I have had so much work for some days that I could write but little. It seems we shall have an armistice for three weeks in a few days; the cannons have been silent since midnight. Will it lead to peace? It seems so, and God grant it. At any rate it gives us, if it comes to pass, all the forts of Paris, and at the end of three weeks we shall, if God will, take possession of the city as well. Farewell, heart. Favre is coming with some Generals.

Kindest regards; embrace our children, or is the long one already on his way here? Köller says Marie is becoming quite stout, the dearest child will press heavily on my horse.

Yours,

v. B.

LXVIII.

Telegram. VERSAILLES, *the 28th January, 1871.*

Surrender of all the Paris forts, and a three weeks' armistice on land and sea, signed by me and M. Jules Favre. Paris army remains in the city as prisoners of war.

BISMARCK.

LXIX.

VERS., 30.1.'71.

I am quite well, my heart, the High double visit was only out of curiosity and zeal for an urgent matter. I was still sitting at the table with the bureau, when the High Surprise entered. I have the house full of Frenchmen daily. Favre works in my little drawing-room, I in the bedroom: there is so much to arrange and write that I seldom go to bed before 2 or 3, but then I sleep very well until 10 or 11. Paris is living now on our bread, the people had no notion how thoroughly they had destroyed the railways. Kindest regards. Yours,

v. B.

I write with a pencil as I have not time enough to dip my pen in the ink.



BISMARCK IN 1894.

Facing p. 108.

LXX.

1st Febr., 1871.

Quite well and a great deal of work. Frenchmen all day, early and late, about the carrying out of the armistice. The people are so unskilled in business that I have to help them with their work. Favre sits daily in my room writing from 12 to 10. Many thanks to Marie for her letter.

Yours,

v. B.

LXXI.

VERS., 3.2.'71.

MY HEART,

I am expecting Herbert this morning, and will give him the fat letter. How can the dear boy get along without horses? He must march with his detachment at least from Lagny here, and then further again to the outposts, even if he was not ordered back to the regiment. Well, we shall see to-morrow, if God will, what he thinks about it, and I am very pleased to have been able to take hold of him and see him again.

Yesterday, I was at St. Cloud, Battery One, just opposite Rothschild's. You cannot conceive, without having seen it, what destruction our guns from Mont Valerien have wrought in these charming villages west and south of the Bois de Boulogne from Mendon to St. Cloud. Burned ruins are but a small part of it; the houses are completely destroyed and, in the fantastic sections which the shells have left standing, you can see furniture and curtains in inaccessible overhanging upper stories, silk, marble, and bronze. I drove with Roon, who is considerably better, and who sends you his kind regards. I have telegraphed to-day to Princess Carl. The "Highness" question will, I hope, be settled according to wishes in the course of time.

I found French ministers and generals here when I came back from St. Cloud; they can scarcely live without me, at least they cannot work. Perhaps there will be dissensions and fighting among them. Gambetta gave in first apparently, and now makes difficulties, and accuses Favre and the Parisians of treason. I don't think that he

will find adherents, the desire for peace is predominant. But he forces us to make the terms of the armistice harder than we should have done otherwise. Kendal, pale and wounded, has just come in with papers. Kiss dear Marie for me, and farewell.

Yours,

v. B.

LXXII.

Telegram.

VERSAILLES, *the 4th February, 1871.*

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK,

Herbert is here in the best of health. Please find out what is officially known about his removal to the regiment: as soon as you receive the news there, send it on to me by telegraph.

v. BISMARCK.

LXXIII.

VERSAILLES, *February the 5th, 1871.*

His Majesty, the Emperor and King, has been pleased to bestow the Iron Cross, 2nd Class, on Your Excellency's son, second lieutenant in the First Dragoons Guards, stationed here. Most obediently I have the

honour to transmit it to you herewith, respectfully leaving to you the further transmittal of the same.

(Signed) V. ALBEDYLL.

*His Excellency, Count v. Bismarck,
The Imperial Chancellor, etc., etc., etc.*

At last, then, though he deserved it in August. But the Court air in which they grow was absent from him in the hospital. I am quite well, with Frenchmen daily in excess.

Yours,
v. B.

LXXIV.

VERSAILLES, 10.2.'71.

MY DARLING,

Herbert is just going away, and leaves me alone with the weather—the usual kind at such partings—dull and rainy. I was very pleased to see him. His removal has been proposed by the regiment, but not yet ordered by the division, so that he must lead his detachment back. It is just as well, if it should come to that, that he should

himself attend to his horses and things, see you again, and assure you of the baselessness of the newspaper rumours about my health. I rode for hours with him yesterday, and for weeks I have only been angry and unwell one day.

"*Herr Favre*" is announced, and the post is waiting. Kindest regards to Marie.

Yours,

v. B.

LXXV.

Monday, 13.2.'71.

I have quite lost Herbert. I wrote and telegraphed to him at Lagny without result. Telegram from Brogowski,* which I sent on again to Berlin. It came in on the day after his marching away. It is perhaps better so on account of the horses and things. Bill was seen quite well three days ago; the messenger laughed again when informing me of it.

In haste,

v. B.

Commander of the 1st Dragoon Guards.

H

LXXVI.

17.2.

For eight days now it has been spring weather. Buds on the bushes, white snow-drops* in the garden, and violets under glass. Kindest regards to Marie. In three weeks I hope to be with you, my heart, if it is God's will.

Yours,

v. B.

LXXVII.

VERSAILLES, 27.2.'71.

MY DEAR HEART,

I have badly requited your daily faithfulness in writing, and each time Engel brought your letter to my bed I was conscience-stricken, and made good resolutions; but one day passed like another, six or seven hours with Thiers and Favre. My little friend Thiers is bright and amiable, but no man of business for verbal negotiations. A foam of ideas rushes irresistibly from him as from the mouth of an open bottle, and tires one's patience, as it prevents one from getting

* Enclosed in the letter.

at the real drinkable stuff, which is the main, thing. Yet he is a fine little fellow, white-haired, worthy, and amiable, with good old French manners, and it is very difficult for me to be as hard with him as I have to be. The rascals know this, and consequently push him forward. Yesterday, at last, we signed: more gained than I think wise, in my personal political calculation. But I have to take into consideration from above and below sentiments which do not make calculations. We take Alsace and German Lorraine, together with Metz and its very indigestible elements, and over 1,300 million thalers. The final difficulty will be to drive these conditions through the Assembly at Bordeaux, 700 heads strong. But God has guided us so far with His strong hand; He will now assure us the peace for which, besides the rabble in France, many honest folk among us, and also among the enemy, have fallen, are crippled, or are in mourning. My heart is full of humble thanks, and I hope to be with you and both your "blue boys" in about fourteen days. God preserve you, and give us a speedy reunion. With

regard to the Entry, there is no more danger there than in anywhere in life, under God's protection. Kindest regards above all to Marie, and to your faithful comforter, Frau von E(isendecker).

Yours,

v. B.

LXXVIII.

VERSAILLES, *5th March*, 1871.

MY DEAR HEART,

It is just five months ago, to-day, since I entered this poor little room, and to-day I take the resolution, with God's help, to leave it to-morrow. Whether I can keep it still depends on Emperors, Grand Dukes, and opportunities of travelling ; of the latter the first apparently leaves Lagny next Thursday, unless I wish to take slow trains. I will stay at Metz overnight, and the next day I shall hasten on to you at Berlin by express, *via* Bingen. Meanwhile, everyone seizes me by the coat-tails, and bothers me with questions which no one can answer. His Majesty is going on Wednesday to Ferrières. I, if I can, leave to-morrow. This will be decided

this evening. The King wishes to review many troops yet. He says that he will never see them again, as there will be no review in the next three years, and he does not expect to live beyond that time. But he is so well that there is no reason why he should not live to be eighty years if anyone does. Your fear of the Parisians was unnecessary. I rode on Wednesday with Gordon* through Porte Maillot, turned back at the Arc de Triomphe, as I could not pass it before His Majesty, and then rode all the way back with Wartensleben,† was recognised everywhere, hissed a little only by young men. No trace of assassins. The King has not been able to get in at all, as the French so hurried forward the ratification. I am sorry for that, as nothing would have happened to him. At the sound of the "Retreat" on Thursday, thousands of Parisians followed, arm-in-arm with our soldiers, and at "Helmets off for prayer," took off their hats and said, "*Voilà ce que nous manque,*"

* Commander of the 11th Division, which entered Paris after the parade at Longchamps.

† Lieutenant of the 5th Uhlan Regiment and attache.

and that no doubt was correct. Before the end of the week, if God wills, I shall be with you.

Yours most faithfully,
v. B.

LXXIX.

Telegram.

SAARBRÜCK, 8.3.1871.

COUNTESS VON BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN,
Berlin.

I have just arrived at Saarbrück, and hope to reach Anhalt Station by express on Thursday morning.

BISMARCK.

